



# Virginia State Bar

## Bench-Bar Relations Committee

### Model Local Bench-Bar Community Building Activities

Fostering strong relationships between the judiciary and legal practitioners is vital for the effective functioning of the justice system. Bar associations play a key role in bridging this connection, ensuring mutual understanding and collaboration between the bench and the bar.

This model list of activities is designed to help local bar associations build and enhance bench-bar relations, encouraging open communication, professional development, and community engagement.

By working together, judges and attorneys create more harmonious and efficient legal environments, benefiting the legal profession and the broader community they serve.

Below is a non-inclusive list of current bench-bar programs across the Commonwealth followed by general event suggestions. If you have any questions or programs or activities to be included, please contact the chair of the Bench-Bar Relations Committee, Bruce Russell at [bruce@bhr2law.com](mailto:bruce@bhr2law.com).

### Bar Association Benefits

<p><b>Charlottesville-Albemarle County Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ CABA extends restricted membership to local judges without requiring dues. The restrictions apply to association voting privileges and allows them to serve on certain committees (e.g., Judicial Endorsement Committee).</li><li>▪ <a href="http://www.cabaonline.org">www.cabaonline.org</a></li></ul>	<p><b>Norfolk and Portsmouth Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ NPBA's Board President participates in portrait unveilings and investitures as well as helps to financially support the cost of judicial portraits and investiture ceremonial gavels.</li><li>▪ Provides complimentary memberships for judges and law clerks.</li><li>▪ <a href="http://www.norfolkandportsmouthbar.org">www.norfolkandportsmouthbar.org</a></li></ul>
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### Breakfasts

<p><b>Chesterfield Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ CBA holds an annual breakfast with the judges.</li><li>▪ <a href="https://www.chesterfieldbarassociation.com/">https://www.chesterfieldbarassociation.com/</a></li></ul>	<p><b>Henrico County Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ HCBA hosts two annual "Breakfasts with the Judges," one with general district and circuit court judges and another with juvenile and domestic relations district court judges from 8:00 – 9:00 am.</li><li>▪ <a href="http://www.henricobar.org">www.henricobar.org</a></li></ul>
<p><b>Prince William County Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ PWCBA holds "Breakfast with the Judges" in the spring and the fall from 8:00- 9:00 am.</li><li>▪ <a href="https://www.pwcba.org/">https://www.pwcba.org/</a></li></ul>	

## CLEs

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Chesterfield Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ CBA holds one CLE every year, usually in the fall. This year’s CLE was a roundtable discussion with the Chesterfield JDR Judges.</li> <li>▪ <a href="https://www.chesterfieldbarassociation.com/">https://www.chesterfieldbarassociation.com/</a></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Fairfax Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ FBA holds a two-hour annual “Bench Bar Dialogue” featuring a panel discussion of judges (including federal).</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.fairfaxbar.org">www.fairfaxbar.org</a></li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Henrico County Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ HCBA hosts a one-hour Bench-Bar CLE in February from 4:00 – 5:00 pm.</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.henricobar.org">www.henricobar.org</a></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Prince William County Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ PWCBA offers CLEs where judges present throughout the year.</li> <li>▪ <a href="https://www.pwcba.org/">https://www.pwcba.org/</a></li> </ul>

## Committees/Meetings

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Norfolk and Portsmouth Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NPBA holds quarterly Bench Bar Relations Committee meeting with local judges to discuss areas of interest and areas needing improvement.</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.norfolkandportsmouthbar.org">www.norfolkandportsmouthbar.org</a></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Loudoun County Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ LCBA bench-bar committees meet with the applicable judges in the 20<sup>th</sup> Circuit to develop, propose, and relay recommendations and requests among the LCBA and the judges.</li> <li>▪ LCBA has the following standing committees: Circuit Court Bench Bar Committee, General District Court Bench Bar Committee, Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court Bench Bar Committee.</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.loudounbar.org">www.loudounbar.org</a></li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Prince William County Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ PWCBA holds annual bar/bench meetings with each level of the courts and has specific subject matter exchanges through the substantive PWCBA committees on policies, procedures and legislative initiatives impacting the respective areas of law (e.g., criminal, family, immigration)</li> <li>▪ <a href="https://www.pwcba.org/">https://www.pwcba.org/</a></li> </ul>	

## Community/Pro Bono Focused

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Norfolk and Portsmouth Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NPBA provides financial support for the Norfolk Law Library in the Norfolk Courthouse.</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.norfolkandportsmouthbar.org">www.norfolkandportsmouthbar.org</a></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Norfolk and Portsmouth Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NPBA’s Pro Bono Committee’s project, “Access to Justice” features judges and members to collaboratively assist local citizens.</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.norfolkandportsmouthbar.org">www.norfolkandportsmouthbar.org</a></li> </ul>
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## Conferences/Conventions

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The 27<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, and 30<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuits</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Washington County Bar Association and the Southwest Virginia Legal Aid Society host an annual “Small-Firm Conference and Regional Bench-Bar Forum” for attorneys practicing in the four judicial circuits in September from 8:30 am – 4:45 pm (virtual option available statewide).</li> <li>▪ CLEs are provided in plenary and breakout sessions and have included a legislative update,</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Richmond Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RBA holds an Annual Bench Bar Conference in October from 8:00 am – 12:15 pm. The RBA planning committee includes members of the judiciary and from the following area bar associations: Chesterfield County Bar, Greater Richmond Criminal Bar, Henrico County Bar, Henrico County Bar, Hill-Tucker Bar, Metro Richmond Family Law Bar, Metropolitan Richmond Women’s Bar.</li> </ul>
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<p>ethics/discipline update, and court and subject matter specific sessions (7 hours).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The event has a sponsor presentation at lunch.</li> <li>▪ Invitees include members from the following bar associations: the Bristol, Buchanan, Dickenson, Lee, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, and Wise County &amp; City of Norton.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ CLEs are provided in breakout sessions in civil, criminal, and J&amp;DR practice areas (3 hours).</li> <li>▪ The event starts with a continental breakfast reception and is followed by an RBA Luncheon with a featured speaker.</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.richmondbar.org">www.richmondbar.org</a></li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Fairfax Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ FBA holds an annual Bench Bar Convention during a fall weekend at a destination location.</li> <li>▪ The Convention features up to 9 CLE credits, many with judicial panel discussions, a welcome reception, off-site events, and “meet-and-mingle” breakfasts.</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.fairfaxbar.org">www.fairfaxbar.org</a></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Roanoke Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RBA holds an annual Bench Bar Conference in February from 12:00 pm – 3:00 pm.</li> <li>▪ A CLE one-hour CLE is followed by the “State of the Judiciary” addresses from local judges, followed by an open forum discussion.</li> <li>▪ The event includes lunch.</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.roanokebar.com">www.roanokebar.com</a></li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Norfolk and Portsmouth Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NPBA hosts an annual Bench Bar Conference in April from 12:00 – 6:00 pm.</li> <li>▪ CLEs are provided in plenary and breakout sessions and have included a legislative update, ethics/discipline update, and court and subject matter specific sessions (4 hours).</li> <li>▪ The event starts with lunch and a keynote speaker, has a raffle, and is followed by a sponsored reception.</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.norfolkandportsmouthbar.org">www.norfolkandportsmouthbar.org</a></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Virginia Beach Bar Association Annual Bench-Bar Conference</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ VBBA holds an annual Bench-Bar Conference during the summer from 12:00 – 5:00 pm.</li> <li>▪ CLE topics have included a legislative update and presentations on each court, juvenile and domestic relations district, general district, and circuit court, with practice pointers and legal refreshers for practitioners.</li> <li>▪ The event has one break with coffee, assorted beverages, and snacks.</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.vbbarassoc.com">www.vbbarassoc.com</a></li> </ul>

## Dinners/Dinner Dance

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Richmond Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RBA’s Litigation Section partners with local Judges to put on a Judges’ dinner in the spring.</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.richmondbar.org">www.richmondbar.org</a></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Loudoun County Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ LCBA hosts an annual Bench Bar Dinner Dance with proceeds supporting Law Camp.</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.loudounbar.org">www.loudounbar.org</a></li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Fairfax Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ FBA holds an annual themed Bench-Bar Dinner Dance in March. During the dinner FBA pays tribute to judicial achievements, presents judicial portraits, and includes special commemorations. It also includes a silent auction for the Fairfax Law Foundation.</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.fairfaxbar.org">www.fairfaxbar.org</a></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Prince William County Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ PWCBA holds an annual Bench-Bar Dinner Dance in April. The event (i) starts with a reception; (ii) features a silent auction for the PWC Bar Foundation; and (iii) during the dinner, gives awards to members, presents judicial portraits and celebrates retirements. Other local bar associations (e.g., NOVABAA) purchase tables at the event.</li> <li>▪ <a href="https://www.pwcba.org/">https://www.pwcba.org/</a></li> </ul>

## Newsletters

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Fairfax Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ FBA includes interviews with judges in its member newsletter.</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.fairfaxbar.org">www.fairfaxbar.org</a></li> </ul>	
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## Social Events

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Chesterfield Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ CBA holds several planned socials throughout the year including an annual holiday party.</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.chesterfieldbarassociation.com/">www.chesterfieldbarassociation.com/</a></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Prince William County Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ PWCBA holds an end-of-year “Bar Crawl” for members and judges.</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.pwcba.org/">www.pwcba.org/</a></li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Fairfax Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ FBA holds Bench-Bar Happy Hours.</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.fairfaxbar.org">www.fairfaxbar.org</a></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Prince William County Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ PWCBA hosts an annual Legislative Reception for members, judges, and local legislators.</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.pwcba.org/">www.pwcba.org/</a></li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Prince William County Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ PWCBA holds receptions typically following judicial ceremonies (e.g., investitures).</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.pwcba.org/">www.pwcba.org/</a></li> </ul>	

## Young/New Lawyer Focused

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Fairfax Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ FBA’s Young Lawyers Section holds dinners with judges at local restaurants.</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.fairfaxbar.org">www.fairfaxbar.org</a></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Co-hosted with the VSB Young Lawyers Conference</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Alexandria Bar Association:</b> a bench-bar networking event.</li> <li>▪ <b>Hampton Roads Bar Association:</b> A Bench-Bar Breakfast with the South at D’egg Diner in downtown Norfolk.</li> <li>▪ <b>Harrisonburg-Rockingham Bar Association:</b> Bench-Bar Luncheon with one hour of CLE at the Capital Ale House in Harrisonburg.</li> <li>▪ <b>Roanoke Bar Association:</b> Yoga &amp; Pints in Roanoke.</li> <li>▪ <b>Virginia Women Attorneys Association (VWAA):</b> a bench-bar networking event at Tumbling Creek Cider Company.</li> <li>▪ <b>VWAA Abingdon/Southwest Virginia Chapter:</b> Summer Interns &amp; New Lawyers Networking Reception at The Spring House in Abingdon.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Norfolk and Portsmouth Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NPBA’s Young Lawyers Section holds a “Breakfast with the Bench” event quarterly.</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.norfolkandportsmouthbar.org">www.norfolkandportsmouthbar.org</a></li> </ul>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Norfolk and Portsmouth Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Young Lawyers Section holds a Fall Reception which is usually held at a Judge’s home where all membership is invited to attend.</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.norfolkandportsmouthbar.org">www.norfolkandportsmouthbar.org</a></li> </ul>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Prince William County Bar Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ PWCBA holds “Intro to Courts” a judicial panel for new lawyers to meet with and ask questions.</li> <li>▪ <a href="https://www.pwcba.org/">https://www.pwcba.org/</a></li> </ul>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>VSB’s Young Lawyers Conference</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lobbying: Grow Your Practice by Advocating for Change (non-CLE with Eckert Seamans in Richmond).</li> <li>▪ Bridging the Generational Gap for Women in the Law with Lauren Stiller Rikleen (Harrisonburg).</li> <li>▪ A Bench-Bar Dinner in October to celebrate diversity of the Bench.</li> <li>▪ The Judicial Squares CLE at the VSB Annual Meeting.</li> <li>▪ The Attorney General Candidate Debate at the VSB Annual Meeting.</li> </ul>	

# Bench-Bar Relations Committee's Event Suggestions

**Judicial Feedback Sessions:** Organize sessions where judges provide constructive feedback to attorneys on court procedures, filings, and advocacy techniques.

**Pro Bono Initiatives:** Collaborate with the judiciary on pro bono projects, legal aid clinics, or public legal education seminars that benefit the community.

**Law Day or Constitution Day Events:** Partner with local schools or civic groups to organize educational events where judges and attorneys present about the legal system.

**Mock Trials and Moot Courts:** Involve both attorneys and judges in local law school or high school mock trials and moot court competitions, offering guidance and feedback to participant.

**Judicial Shadowing Program:** Create opportunities for young attorneys to shadow judges for a day to gain insights into courtroom processes and judicial decision-making.

**Bench-Bar Mentorship Program:** Pair experienced attorneys and judges with newer attorneys to provide mentorship on courtroom advocacy and professionalism.

**New Lawyer Orientations:** Host events for newly admitted lawyers with judicial speakers to familiarize them with local court procedures and expectation.

**Bench-Bar Town Hall Meetings:** Organize open forums where attorneys and judges can discuss local legal concerns, court administration issues, and practice challenges in a constructive environment.

**Annual State of the Courts Address:** Invite the Chief Judge or presiding judges to present an annual "State of the Courts" report, outlining court priorities, challenges, and updates.

**Judicial Roundtable Discussions:** Small group roundtable meetings that encourage open dialogue between judges and attorneys on specific practice areas or court procedures.

**Public Acknowledgment of Judicial Milestones:** Publish articles or releases acknowledging judges for notable rulings, anniversaries, or significant career milestones.

**Technology Training for the Bar:** Partner with judges to offer technology training for attorneys on courtroom tech tools, e-filing, and remote hearing protocols.

**Joint Committees on Court Improvements:** Form committees comprising judges and attorneys to collaborate on projects to improve court efficiency, such as modernizing court rules or improving court facilities.

**Court Procedures Task Force:** Establish a joint bench-bar task force to review and recommend improvements to local court procedures and practices.